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Atari Online News, Etc.
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->From the Editor's Keyboard "Saying it like it is!"
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Words can never express the true thoughts, especially in light of the recent devastation in the gulf states, but I wanted to express our concern and best wishes to those affected by Hurricane Katrina. I know that we have some readers and friends in that area; we hope that everyone is healthy and safe. It's terrible to feel so helpless, unable to do much to help. And we're on the outside, looking in. Whatever you can do to help - a donation to the relief effort seems appropriate - will somehow do something to help alleviate the hardships of our southern neighbors.

Well, Labor Day weekend is upon us once again. It's hard to believe, but here we are at the unofficial end of the summer. Where did it go? Our vacation is winding down, as well. We had a number of plans, but due to the lack of commitment from a couple of local contractors, some of those plans are still unfulfilled. We're still waiting for some siding to be replaced, as well as having our heating oil tank replaced. We wasted a number of days waiting around for phone calls that never materialized. And when we called, we got empty promises. Naturally, I'm sure that both will schedule the actual work at the most inconvenient time.

However, all was not totally lost. I finally decided to get my act in gear and go through my study and do some cleaning out. As most of you can probably sympathize with me, we never seem to have enough space for everything. I've been saving stuff for years - I'm a packrat. I've had stuff in boxes, tucked away since we moved into our house eight years ago! Well, I finally started going through some of that stuff. Reluctantly, I tossed away old Atari magazines, old newsletters, software that I'll never look at or use, and more. For the software that I wanted to save, I tossed the boxes and just kept the disks and manuals. Heck, I'm not even sure if these disks are still readable! Once the new oil tank is in, I'll go through some of the boxes in the basement and clear some of that stuff out too! I'm still working on the clean-up, but things are getting better. I can almost get at the two huge wall unit bookcases that I have here. Once I get most of the "junk" out of here, I should be able to rearrange things to create more room. Certainly not what my wife would consider appropriate, but better for the moment. I guess once I can see and get at everything, I can make some improvements later.

Well, I know this is all trivial compared to what is happening to our southern friends, but perhaps it's easier to get a handle on. Enjoy the rest of your long holiday weekend, and please celebrate responsibly.

Until next time...

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JayMSA 1.08 Free Edition Released

Jan Krupka has announced:

We are happy to announce that our floppy image tool JayMSA is freeware now.

JayMSA is utility to view and depack files from MSA archive directly to hard disk without writing a floppy. Beside that JayMSA can create MSA archives the same way as original MSA program does.

You can download new version 1.08 which is working in MiNT from Jay Software's website.

http://jaysoft.atari.org/

Atari800WinPLus 4.0 Full

Vasco/Tristesse has announced:

Jaskier/Taquart has just finished and published the final version of our beloved emulator Atari800WinPLus - version 4.0. "This is the final of my year's work on perfecting the emulator" - as the author says.

http://www.atari8.info/dodajkomentarz.php?news=249&lang=en

New Version of ExtenDOS Available

The new release of ExtenDOS, ExtenDOS 4, is now available. It features DVD support, improvements to the audio CD player (including use of a local copy of the freedb database) and a fully-integrated version of UNIMINT.XFS for use with freemint. Further information is available from the ExtenDOS 4 page at:

  http://www.anodynesoftware.com/e4/main.htm
or:
  http://www.cyberus.ca/~anodyne/e4/main.htm

Roger Burrows
Anodyne Software

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->A-ONE User Group Notes! - Meetings, Shows, and Info!
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CCAG Show
October 22, 2005

Dear Classic Computing and Gaming Enthusiast,

Buy, sell, trade, play, and see classic video games, computers, peripherals, memorabilia, and more at the Classic Computing and Gaming Show (CCAG) on Saturday October 22, 2005 from 2:00 P.M. until 7:00 P.M. at the National Guard Armory, 3520 Grove Ave. Lorain, Ohio. Vendors, clubs, and collectors will be displaying and selling their retrogaming and retrocomputing goods, from Pong and Atari to Nintendo, Apple and IBM to Commodore and everything in between with many set up for you to play with and explore.

And once again, it’s free, that’s right absolutely *FREE*, for attendees and dealers!

We have 5000+ square feet of space. Help us fill it all up! (The price certainly can’t get any better. :)

Get the latest information on our website, www.ccagshow.com, or write us at i...@ccagshow.com. And don’t forget to spread the word!

We’ll see you there. It’s gonna be great! :)

- The CCAG 2005 Committee
Link: http://www.ccagshow.com/

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PEOPLE ARE TALKING
compiled by Joe Mirando
joe@atarinews.org

Hidi ho friends and neighbors. You’ve heard me say it before (although probably not in these words), and you’re going to hear me say it again... Mother... Nature... is... a... bitch.

The thought that, in this day and age and in this country, with all our technology and supposed wisdom, we are still at the mercy of the weather, is a tough thing to come to terms with. We tend to think of ourselves as masters of our own destiny, and that we have advanced enough to control our own fate. But along comes Katrina, and everything is shot to hell.

Although I and my family are safe and sound here in the northeast, there are a few people that I know who are down in the Louisiana/Mississippi/Alabama/Florida area. I see the images of the carnage in New Orleans and in Gulfport and in several other places that no doubt will fade from my memory as life goes on and wonder how many lives have been destroyed or changed forever by something as basic and primal as a rainstorm. Granted, with New Orleans situated 12 feet below sea level, we probably should have expected it, but there again, Mother Nature had her way, and there was precious little we could do about it other than to just get the heck out of the storm's way with the few possessions that you could carry and stick in the back of your car.

But anyway, despite the warzone feel (I heard one reporter say: "New Orleans is NOT Baghdad. You can GET food and water in Baghdad!"), help is on its way. Already the Red Cross has taken in more than 70 million dollars for relief efforts. Much more will be needed, of course, with entire counties, parishes, cities, towns, neighborhoods, families and lives simply washed away, it's not hard to imagine the cost of this storm rising to multiple billions of dollars without being able to restore things to normal.

And amidst this carnage, there is strife. Heat and humidity sap the strength of those remaining, food and clean water are hard to come by, gasoline is a distant memory, and something as simple as a clean, dry shirt takes on the aura of a trophy or a holy icon. And yes, there is looting, but my guess is that in the days to come we'll begin to hear more about WHAT was being looted. I'm betting on things like clean clothes and footware, bottled water and waterproof tarps. I would have loved to see Walmart Central (or whatever they call the control center of their empire) say, "Hey, we're gonna open up these stores. Come and get what you need. We've got clothes and shoes and some non-perishable food. We're not going to let you drag multiple shopping carts full of wide-screen televisions out the door, and if we catch you selling the stuff we gave you for free, we're going to send our evil drones after you to suck your brain out, but you need stuff and it just so happens that we've got some stuff." I guess not, huh?

I don't want to turn this into a sermon, but please consider giving whatever you can to the Red Cross or one of the other organizations that will be helping out. If you can't make a donation, then thoughts and prayers couldn't hurt. Hey, we're not in school here... I can ask you to pray if I want to. <grin>

Well, let's get to the news, hints, tips and info available from the UseNet.

From the comp.sys.atari.st NewsGroup
==========

Jerome Vernet asks for help in troubleshooting a MegaSTe:

"I've just gotten a Mega Ste, unfortunately, it seems to be dead, because of our great postal services.....

http://perso.wanadoo.fr/jerome.vernet/specs/atari.htm

It was working before sending...

After little work (!) to make it more presentable, it won't boot...

When powered on, fan and hard drive spin, but no front LED, nothing on the monitor (just a little 'crack' from the SM124 speaker).

I've checked internal connection, seems to be ok."

Mark Duckworth tells Jerome that it...

"Looks like two different possibilities. 1 being one rail of the power supply is damaged but not the other. Like the 5V rail but the 12V rail is okay. Additionally, the power supplies in these things have 4 metal legs. They sit in these grooves. If proper screws aren't in and even if they are, the legs can pop out of these grooves. Since the psu section of your case is... well.. smashed, it's completely reasonable to assume that the leg popped out and is shorting all kinds of stuff. You should not have powered this machine on without a detailed inspection. It could be too late now. Though if you were going for insurance money, your course of action was probably best."

Jerome tells Mark:

"Yes, that's right, some legs (the left one) pop out - no screw at all.... But doesn't seem to short anything. I didn't put a screw, as it's for ground purposes and the two others are in place. I will check that.

The main board is powered by +5V, I suppose. I will check the power unit, I've just found the pinout on the net."

'Techie' Alison tells Jerome:

"Completely and utterly dismantle it. Power the motherboard while out of the case to do your diagnosis. Press all of the chips in. Also, plonk the plastic case into a hot-hot bath for a few hours to get the plastic malleable again, the metal can be straightened out. Toothpaste and a nail brush/tooth brush work wonders... Those keys should hopefully press back in... just removing some of mine... mmm, see what you mean, the plastic stumps have broken off of the bottom of some of the keys.. Use 24hour araldite glue as seems less brittle than the rapid stuff..

Really feel for you, I can imagine how upset you must be after the anticipation of getting it. Had an STE turn up like that from eBay, although I suspect the seller had under-exaggerated it's rubbish condition, http://cgi.ebay.co.uk/ws/eBayISAPI.dll?ViewItem&category=38597&item=8195234732 Actually, there was A LOT of damage to the casing, and it was very horrible yellow. The one in the picture I don't think is the one I had...

You'll get it to work."

Ronald Hall asks for info on the EtherNEC networking card:

"Okay, I've got the EtherNEC installed. I installed version 1.26 of

STing. I have the following files setup in on my C drive:

AUTO - STING.PRG and STING.INF
CPX   - STINGPORT.CPX and STING.CPX
STING - ENEC.MIF and ENEC.STX

I went into the STINGPORT CPX and followed the instructions from these 2 places:

http://www.dwade.freeserve.co.uk/atari/main.html
http://hardware.atari.org/sfl/index.htm

My ROUTE.TAB file looks like this:

```
#
#  This is the routing table, to be used by the router to route IP
   datagrams
#
#  Format of routes comprises four entries, separated by TABs :
#    - First the network (subnet number) which can be reached by using this
#       route.
#    - Next the subnet mask associated with that network.
#    - Then the port name follows. This is the name as listed by ConfSTinG
       or
#       STNGPORT.CPX.
#    - Last entry is the IP address of a host on the attached network that
#       can act as a gateway.
#
#  The network specified can be directly attached to the specified port, in
#  that case no gateway is needed, as the datagram can be routed directly.
#  For a route to a network that is directly attached therefore the gateway
#  entry should be set to 0.0.0.0.
#
#  For an attached Ethernet the gateway entry specifies the gateway out of
#  the Ethernet, for a serial line it is simply the host at the other end.
#
#  It is advisable to finish the table by a default route. This route is
   most
#  easily obtained by specifying a network 0.0.0.0 with a netmask 0.0.0.0.
#
#  Routes with invalid addresses or absent ports are ignored.
#
# 192.68.0.0            255.255.255.240         Modem 1         192.68.0.1
# 130.75.75.0           255.255.255.128         Ser.2/LAN       0.0.0.0
# 0.0.0.0               0.0.0.0                 Ser.2/LAN       130.75.75.16
#
192.168.0.104   255.255.255.0   EtherNet    0.0.0.0
0.0.0.0 0.0.0.0 EtherNet    192.168.0.1
```

My DEFAULT.CFG file looks like this:

```
#------------------------------------------------------------------------
# File name:    DEFAULT.CFG (for STinG)         Revision date:  2000.07.05
#------------------------------------------------------------------------
#
# First we have settings used by STinG and its distributed CPX and STX :
# ====================================================================
# (Read STING.HYP for info on how to use them to improve performance.)
#
#  Used by the STinG kernel :
```

```
#
ALLOCMEM    = 100000
#
ACTIVATE    = TRUE
THREADING   = 10
FRAG_TTL    = 60
#
#
#  Used for ICMP protocol :
#
ICMP_GMT    = -60
ICMP_AD     = 10
ICMP_FLAG   = 0
#
#
#  Used for UDP protocol :
#
UDP_PORT    = 1024
UDP_ICMP    = 1
#
#
#  Used for TCP protocol :
#
TCP_PORT    = 1024
MSS         = 1460
RCV_WND     = 10000
DEF_RTT     = 1500
DEF_TTL     = 64
TCP_ICMP    = 1
#
#
#  Used by the DNS resolver :
#
#  Note that the first one of these three will not normally be used.
#  It will only be used when an address consisting of a single word
#  is used in a URI.  The DOMAIN value is then appended to complete
#  the URI as needed for the nameserver request packets.
#  (I still recommend using full URIs instead, to avoid confusion.)
#
DOMAIN      = sting.org
DNS_CACHE   = 64
DNS_SAVE    = TRUE
#
#
#  The three following are not really used by the kernel anymore, as the
#  dialer redefines these for each dialup, as they can vary when you have
#  more than one ISP dial script.  They should be defined here anyway,
#  with the values you normally use online, as some offline clients may
#  expect to find them, and also for use in local networking.
#
USERNAME    = darklord
HOSTNAME    = darkforce4.ky.org
FULLNAME    = Ronald J. Hall
#
#
#  The one following is also redefined by the dialer, and you only need to
#  define it here if you use a local network, so all machines in that net
#  can find the nameserver (the dialer only defines it on one machine).
#  Note that the value of NAMESERVER variables should always be a numeric
#  IP address, since another nameserver would be needed to resolve a URI.
```

```
#  You can specify more than one address, separated by ", " .
#   (eg: "NAMESERVER = 193.45.240.2, 193.45.240.4")
#
NAMESERVER  = 192.168.0.1
#
#
#  Here starts the stuff used by external clients and servers :
#  ============================================================
#
# Used by the Dialer :
# --------------------
#
#  The setting below is not used by the dialer itself, but by any other
#  client in a local network that wishes to contact the dialer which is
#  resident on a machine equipped with a modem. (By UDP command packets.)
#  If you have no local network, leave it as it is, since that is an IP
#  address reserved for the local machine.
#
DIALER      = 127.0.0.1
#
#
#  The setting below is used by the dialer, but only if you have chosen
#  to activate the DIAL.SCR setting to use a dialup batch file. The path
#  specified below will then be used to find the batch file.
#
LOGIN_BATCH = C:\DIALER\LOGIN.BAT
#
#
# Used by mailers :
# -----------------
#
EMAIL       = dark_lord@charter.net
SMTP_HOST   = smtp.charter.net
MAILER      = mymail
#
POP_HOST    = pop.charter.net
POP_USERNAME= dark_lord
POP_PASSWORD= tenchi13
#
#
# Used by TIME and DAYTIME clients and servers:
# ---------------------------------------------
# (Values used by me, in Sweden in the year 2000.)
#
TIME_ZONE   = +60
TIME_SUMMER = 03.26.10.29
TIME_SERVER = time.demon.co.uk
#
#
# Used by MIDI_EMU server (for some netgames) :
# ---------------------------------------------
#
MIDI_EMU_OUT = next_IP_in_emulated_Midi_ring
#
#
# Add more here as/when needed by other clients and servers
# that you install in your system.  (Read their docs...)
#
#-------------------------------------------------------------------------------
# End of file:  DEFAULT.CFG
```

#--

I set the values in the STINGPORT.CPX module, saved to C, and rebooted. All comes up with no errors. The MAC address shows up in the CPX. I can use the ping program to ping the localhost at 127.0.0.1, and from the ST I can ping 192.168.0.104. I can't ping out to anything else on the network though, nor can any machine on the network ping -in- to 192.168.0.104.

Keep in mind that this is the LAN address I use for my BBS, so the hardware router 'n stuff is correctly setup for 192.168.0.104. With the Lantronix device in place, I can ping 192.168.0.104 from any other comp on the LAN. All my comps point to the routers default gateway address of 192.168.0.1, so I dunno.

Anyone have any ideas?"

Jean-Luc Ceccoli tells Ronald:

"Er... someone correct me if I'm wrong, but it'd rather have to look like this :

192.168.0.0 255.255.255.0 EtherNet 0.0.0.0
0.0.0.0 0.0.0.0 EtherNet 192.168.0.1

Assumed that your gateway should be 192.168.0.1, else replace by the value it is set to."

David Wade adds:

"I don't think it should make any difference, because only the first three bytes should be compared. However perhaps you should correct. Also have you run the HE-xxx.tos test programs first to check everything is ok?"

Edward Baiz adds his thoughts:

"I think possibly it is your ROUTE.TAB file. I had problems until I got it straight. You MUST make sure you do not change the spaces between values. Here is your Route.tab:

```
#  Routes with invalid addresses or absent ports are ignored.
#
# 192.68.0.0            255.255.255.240         Modem 1         192.68.0.1
# 130.75.75.0           255.255.255.128         Ser.2/LAN       0.0.0.0
# 0.0.0.0               0.0.0.0                 Ser.2/LAN       130.75.75.16
#
192.168.0.104   255.255.255.0   EtherNet    0.0.0.0
0.0.0.0 0.0.0.0 EtherNet    192.168.0.1
```

And here is mine:

```
#  For an attached Ethernet the gateway entry specifies the gateway out
of #
the Ethernet, for a serial line it is simply the host at the other end.
#
#  It is advisable to finish the table by a default route. This route is
most
```

```
#  easily obtained by specifying a network 0.0.0.0 with a netmask
0.0.0.0.
#
#  Routes with invalid addresses or absent ports are ignored.
#
0.0.0.0         0.0.0.0         EtherNet                192.168.1.1
#192.168.1.201  255.255.255.0           EtherNet        192.168.1.1
#
192.168.1.1     255.255.255.0           EtherNet                0.0.0.0
```

See the difference.

It is the only thing I can see that is way difference from my setup. I use Sting 1.25 on a STe."

Ronald tells Edward:

"Yes, I've copied/saved your file, and will try to work with it a little bit later (time as always!)...

I've not had a chance to try any software to actually access the 'Net yet, like CAB/Highwire, ftp programs, Newsie, mymail or whatever...but, using the above in my route.tab file, I was able to ping the other computers on my LAN and other comps on my LAN could ping this comp at 192.168.0.104.

That's the good news.

The bad news (so far) is that when I try to telnet into that comps ip address (192.168.0.104), the connection is refused. This is with my BBS software up and running, which works fine with the Lantronix device.

Anyone have any ideas how I can make my BBS software recognize the "incomings" from the STing/cartridge port combo?"

Edward now asks Ronald:

"Did you check all the settings in STING? I would think that may have to do with your problem. What modules do you have in the STING folder?"

Ronald messes around a bit and posts:

"I had to reverse part of my ROUTE.TAB files settings, but once I did that, CAB and NEWSIE both work. I was able to load up the Google search site in CAB. Hurrah!"

Well folks, that's it for this week. I know it's short, but I'm exhausted. It's been a tough week on several levels, and I need some R&R. Hopefully you'll act responsibly over the holiday weekend and not drink and drive. Thanks. The life you save may be mine! 'Till next week, keep your ears open so you'll hear what they're saying when...

PEOPLE ARE TALKING

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->In This Week's Gaming Section - Namco Museum Battle Collection!
PacMan World 3 - 25 Years!
Europe Gets the PSP!
And much more!

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->A-ONE's Game Console Industry News - The Latest Gaming News!

Namco Museum Battle Collection Ships For Playstation Portable

Global video games publisher, Namco Hometek Inc. today announced that "Namco Museum Battle Collection" has shipped to North American retail outlets exclusively for the PSP (PlayStation Portable) system. "Namco Museum Battle Collection" features updated 3D versions of Namco's greatest and most beloved arcade hits, as well as all-new wireless multiplayer capabilities for competitive or cooperative fun.

"Namco Museum Battle Collection" brings together arcade favorites such as "Pac-Man," "Ms. Pac-Man," "Galaga," "Galaxian," "Rally-X," "New Rally-X" and "Dig-Dug" for the most comprehensive handheld compilation of Namco classics ever. Originally released earlier this year in Japan, the U.S. version will feature 10 additional games including "Xevious," "Bosconian," "Mappy," "Tower of Druaga," "Dragon Buster," "Grobda," "Dig Dug 2," "King & Balloon," "Motos" and "Rolling Thunder" bring the total to more than 20 fun-filled titles.

"We have prepared the ultimate collection of more than 20 classic arcade games for the PSP system with 'Namco Museum Battle Collection,'" said Yoshi Niki, business unit director at Namco Hometek Inc. "The new versions of Namco arcade favorites, along with the PSP system's wireless and game sharing capabilities, make this the 'must-have' PSP system title for all types of gaming fans."

Taking full advantage of the PSP system's wireless connectivity, "Namco Museum Battle Collection" allows up to four gamers to battle it out or play together in the game's remixed titles. Players will also be able to share the great nostalgic gameplay of the original titles with their friends in the Game Sharing Mode by wirelessly transferring a portion of the game to another PSP system.

Pac-Man World 3

One of gaming's oldest heroes is celebrating his 25th birthday this year, and if the intro movie from his upcoming game is to be believed, Pac-Man

was planning to spend his special day celebrating with his spherical family and a particularly tasty-looking cake. The forces of evil have other ideas, though, and before Pac-Man is able to take his first bite of birthday cake, he's mysteriously and unceremoniously teleported from the idyllic Pac-Village to the far less picturesque Spectral Realm. An evil genius named Erwin has created a machine that can penetrate this realm of the ghosts, and as a result, the realm has started to collapse into the real world. Your mission in Pac-Man World 3, then, is simply to save the world. We recently had an opportunity to spend some time with a work-in-progress PlayStation 2 version of Pac-Man World 3, and although we encountered a few problems with camera angles and game crashes (as is often the case with unfinished games), we can report that Pac-Man's next adventure is looking quite promising.

In the 25 years since he first appeared in arcades, Pac-Man has evolved from a pill-popping 2D negotiator of mazes into a pill-popping 3D negotiator of levels that incorporate all manner of obstacles and hazards. Pac-Man's enemies have also evolved, and in addition to ghostlike spectral monsters, you'll battle with plenty of different bad guys who can only be beat using some of the numerous new moves that Namco's spherical hero has at his disposal. Most of the enemies that we've encountered to date can't be chomped after swallowing a power pill, so we've had to resort to punching them, butt-bouncing them, or just rolling into them like a bowling ball. The punch is the least powerful of these attacks, but it can be used against enemies who are immune to the butt-bounce attacks, and it's far easier to control than the rolling attack. The butt-bounce feels pretty overpowered in the early levels of the game, particularly after you realize that you're able to string together three of them for a devastating combo quite simply. It didn't take long for us to encounter enemies against whom the attack was useless, though--we invariably came off worse any time we tried to butt-bounce an enemy with spikes on its back. The rolling attack is also very powerful; when used correctly, it can take out four or five enemies simultaneously. Controlling Pac-Man when he's curled up into a fast-moving ball is quite tricky, though, and there are plenty of platforms and ledges around for you to fall from if you're not careful.

Most of Pac-Man's enemies can be defeated without the aid of a power pill.

If the few levels that we've played through are any indication, falling from ledges and platforms will be the least of your worries in many of Pac-Man World 3's locales. It's not the falling that hurts, after all; it's whatever you hit when you stop falling. In Pac-Man World 3 you'll find that landing in pits of spikes or lakes of green goop is a bad idea and that other hazards, such as jets of poisonous gas, are also best avoided. Not everything in the Spectral Realm is deadly to the touch, of course, and in addition to the pills that you'll be munching for points (which are laid out in patterns that do a good job of leading you through each area), you'll find plenty of power-ups, bonus items, and fruit to collect. Our favorite items to date are undoubtedly the "power ribbon" weapon that lets you kill enemies by simply running around them in a full circle and the pickup that instantly transports you to a 3D version of the original Pac-Man maze, where you can earn bonus points before getting back to the game proper. We're told that the original 1980 arcade version of Pac-Man is somewhere in Pac-Man World 3, incidentally, but to date we've not been able to find it.

Another promised feature of Pac-Man World 3 that we've not seen for ourselves just yet is the ability to play certain levels as the ghosts Pinky and Clyde. Quite how Pac-Man's archenemies fit into the storyline of the upcoming game isn't clear at this point, but the possibility that

they’ll join forces with Pac-Man to combat the evil genius Erwin certainly can’t be ruled out. We’ll bring you more information on Pac-Man World 3 as soon as it becomes available.

PSP Launches Across Europe

Sony Computer Entertainment Europe (SCEE) today launched its eagerly anticipated PSP (PlayStation Portable) handheld entertainment system across the European market and throughout Australia and New Zealand.

Following the success of the PSP launches in Japan and the USA, and with over 5 million PSP systems already shipped worldwide, PSP launched in a single v ersion Value Pack, priced at ?249 (?179). The PSP Value Pack contains an added-value package of accessories and entertainment content, including the PSP system with a pouch, 32MB Memory Stick Duo, Battery Pack, Headphones with Remote Control, AC Adaptor, Wrist Strap, cloth and a video/music/game sampler Universal Media Disc (UMD) including several game demos.

A copy of Spider-Man 2 on UMD Video will be available free of charge to early purchasers of PSP, who register their PSP through www.yourpsp.com. The official SCEE web portal for PSP, www.yourpsp.com allows PSP owners to view trailers and screenshots from a wide selection of PSP Game, UMD Video and UMD Music titles, as well as accessing the latest software updates and a host of regularly updated competitions, news and features about PSP. Consumers will also be able to download exclusive content to their PSP.

PSP in Europe will launch with over 30 game titles, all of which have been developed especially to exploit PSP’s stunning high resolution TFT widescreen display. Featuring classic PlayStation brands that have been re-invented for the new format, alongside some all-new properties, the games catalogue offers something for everyone. For speed demons, there’s the new turbo-charged Ridge Racer; sport fans can showboat their skills in World Tour Soccer and Everybody’s Golf; there’s madcap monkey madness in Ape Academy with mini-games ranging from monkey hockey to the ’1m Dash’; and the legendary MediEvil: Resurrection delivers action, humour and an adventure that will challenge all levels of gamer.

A key feature of the PSP is its Wireless LAN capabilities, enabling users to connect to the internet via a ’WiFi hotspot’ and play online across a Wireless Network. In the wireless Ad Hoc Mode, up to 16 PSP systems can also be connected to each other directly, allowing for head-to-head competition with other players in the immediate vicinity.

Wireless functionality is also cleverly exploited in many of the game titles available at launch; GameSharing allows owners of games such as WipEout Pure and Fired Up to share levels of their game with other PSP users, whilst with WipEout Pure gamers can download new crafts, tracks and other content to Memory Stick to further enhance their enjoyment of the game. FORMULA ONE fans will be able to expand their gameplay with a downloadable end of season pack for F1 Grand Prix, including all the grid line-ups for the season and a bonus historic car.

PSP has also received incredible support from third party game publishers, and there will be over 20 third party game titles available during the initial launch period from the world’s top publishers, and over 50 before

the Chrisas peak selling season gets under way.

The resounding success of the UMD Video format in the USA is further proof that PSP offers an all embracing entertainment experience. PSP will launch with 30 movies from a variety of top Hollywood studios including Sony Pictures, Twentieth Century Fox, Buena Vista and Universal. With studios now planning to release ’Day and Date’ with DVD releases, and an extensive catalogue of some 100 movies scheduled for release on UMD Video by Christmas, European PSP owners can look forward to an unmatched choice of entertainment.

The enjoyment of listening to music is a key part of the PSP’s exciting entertainment offering and, in addition to playing music stored on the Memory Stick in MP3, ATRAC 3plus and MPEG-4 AAC format, music videos on UMD Music Videos will also be available. During the initial launch period, three classic music videos will be available from Sanctuary Visual Entertainment; Iron Maiden - Rock in Rio, INXS - Live Baby Live and Bob Marley- Live from Santa Barbara. Along with eight titles from Sony BMG including compilations from Usher, Outkast and The Offspring, and live concerts from Foo Fighters, Rage Against The Machine, Good Charlotte and Incubus, with many more music videos scheduled for release in the run up to Christmas.

"PSPs for the European market will also benefit from the latest system software upgrade", explained David Reeves, President of SCEE. "The European PSPs will contain the latest and most up to date software available. With the introduction of an internet browser to ease the downloading of game trailers and video content from WiFi hotspots, a new codec for optimising the quality of video content on Memory Stick, and a wealth of other improvements to enhance the user experience, European consumers will not only be receiving the most sophisticated and exciting portable entertainment device ever made but will be able to upgrade their PSP’s continually as new functionality is announced".

Retailers throughout Europe beganopening their doors at midnight on Wednesday 31st August to satisfy the enthusiasm of fans, keen to get their hands on one of the first European PSPs.

PSP (PlayStation Portable) Games Available During Launch Period:

Archer Macleans Mercury Ignition Ape Academy Sony Computer Entertainment Europe Burnout Legends EA Coded Arms Konami Colin Mcrae Rally 2005 Plus Codemasters Darkstalkers Chronicles Capcom Dynasty Warriors PSP Koei Everybody’s Golf Sony Computer Entertainment Europe FIFA 06 EA F1 Grand Prix PSP Sony Computer Entertainment Europe Fired Up Sony Computer Entertainment Europe Ghost in the Shell Stand Alone Complex Bandai Grand Theft Auto:Liberty City Stories Take 2 Lumines Ubisoft Midnight Club 3: DUB Edition Take 2 MediEvil Resurrection Sony Computer Entertainment Europe Metal Gear Acid Konami NBA STREET Showdown EA Need for Speed Underground Rivals EA NFL STREET 2 Unleashed EA Pro Evolution Soccer 5 Konami Ridge Racer Sony Computer Entertainment Europe Spider-Man The Movie 2 Activision Tiger Woods PGA TOUR 06 EA TOCA Race Driver 2 Codemasters Tony Hawk Underground 2 Remix Activision Untold Legends:Brotherhood of the Blade Activision Virtual Tennis:World Tour Sega WipEout Pure Sony Computer Entertainment Europe World Snooker Challenge 2005 SEGA World Tour Soccer Sony Computer Entertainment Europe

UMD Video Available During Launch Period:

A Knights Tale Sony Pictures Home Entertainment 13 Going on 30 Sony

Pictures Home Entertainment Bad Boys Sony Pictures Home Entertainment The One Sony Pictures Home Entertainment xXx - The Next Level Sony Pictures Home Entertainment Ghostbusters Sony Pictures Home Entertainment You Got Served Sony Pictures Home Entertainment Hitch Sony Pictures Home Entertainment Spider-Man 2 (softbundle) Sony Pictures Home Entertainment Charlie’s Angels Sony Pictures Home Entertainment Resident Evil Apocalypse Sony Pictures Home Entertainment Hellboy Sony Pictures Home Entertainment Hollow Man Sony Pictures Home Entertainment xXx Sony Pictures Home Entertainment Once Upon A Time In Mexico Sony Pictures Home Entertainment The Punisher Sony Pictures Home Entertainment SWAT Sony Pictures Home Entertainment Anacondas : Hunt For the Blood Orchid Sony Pictures Home Entertainment Van Helsing Universal 8 Mile Universal The Bourne Supremacy Universal The Mummy Returns Universal I Robot Twentieth Century Fox Home Entertainmentv Alien Twentieth Century Fox Home Entertainment Alien v. Predator Twentieth Century Fox Home Entertainment The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen Twentieth Century Fox Home Entertainment Dodgeball Twentieth Century Fox Home Entertainment Robots Twentieth Century Fox Home Entertainment Hitchhikers Guide to the Galaxy Buena Vista Home Entertainment Pirates of the Caribbean Buena Vista Home Entertainment King Arthur Buena Vista Home Entertainment Sin City (UK and Italy only) Buena Vista Home Entertainment

UMD Music Videos Available during Launch Period

Iron Maiden - Rock in Rio Sanctuary Visual Entertainment Bob Marley - Live from Santa Barbara Sanctuary Visual Entertainment INXS - Live Baby Live Sanctuary Visual Entertainment Usher - Rhythm City Vol. 1 Sony BMG Outkast - The Videos" Sony BMG Coheed & Cambria - Live at the Starland Ballroom Sony BMG The Offspring - The Complete Music Video Collection Sony BMG Foo Fighters - Live - Everywhere But Home Sony BMG Rage Against the Machine - Live at the Grand Olympic Auditorium Sony BMG Good Charlotte - Live at Brixton Academy Sony BMG Incubus - Alive at Red Rocks Sony BMG

Game Boy Micro Misses the Mark

Nintendo Co.’s new Game Boy Micro handheld could have been so much more than a tiny hunk of plastic that plays video games. Less than a year after the innovative Nintendo DS arrived with dual screens, a microphone and wireless multiplayer capability, the company is set to release the diminutive Micro on Sept. 19.

But I’m still searching for a compelling reason to spend $99 on this machine, the smallest portable gaming system I’ve ever used, when Nintendo itself already offers better products for not much more money.

Is it for tech-savvy fashionistas who can’t afford Sony Corp.’s sleek but pricey PlayStation Portable? Collectors who insist on owning every flavor of Game Boy ever made?

Perhaps grown-ups who think they’ll somehow look more professional playing "Astro Boy" on a Micro?

Well, that last one is at least plausible. But if you wanted to really grab that market, why not integrate cell phone functionality, wireless connectivity for multiplayer gaming or even a digital audio player?

As it stands, the Micro is nothing more than a redesigned Game Boy Advance SP reduced to a palm-sized rectangle akin in dimensions to a candybar cell phone.

The Nintendo faithful already have a pretty small system in the Game Boy Advance SP - and it costs $20 less. Likewise, for $50 more than a Micro, you can buy a snazzy DS and play new interactive games exclusively for that system, as well as Game Boy Advance games.

That said, the Micro includes several improvements over the aging Game Boy Advance SP (which itself is a retooled, enhanced version of the plain-old Game Boy Advance). Instead of a flip-open, side-lit 32,000 color liquid crystal display, the Micro uses a backlit screen that’s much brighter and sharper. But at only 2 inches diagonal, the flat screen strained my eyes.

At 2.8 ounces, the Micro has almost half the heft of the square-shaped Game Boy Advance SP. It measures just four inches long and under an inch thick.

One thing that has long bugged me about my SP is that you have to buy a separate adapter to use headphones. The Micro remedies that annoyance with a standard headphone jack included.

As with the SP, battery life is excellent on the Micro, with about 10 hours between charges. And the Micro uses the same 32-bit processor and can play the hundreds of games in the Game Boy Advance library.

But it isn’t compatible with new DS titles.

On the fashion front, the Micro comes with swappable faceplates available in camouflage and other patterns. And though it felt a bit cramped in my hands, I prefer it to my SP because its tiny size makes it incredibly easy to take with me.

Still, I can’t get rid of the nagging feeling that the puny Micro is a giant missed opportunity.

Court KOs Online Game Bypass Program

Three men illegally bypassed anti-piracy controls when they developed free technology to let computer users play some games against each other online without using the gamemaker’s own system, a federal appeals court has ruled.

Attorneys for Tim Jung, Ross Combs and Rob Crittenden had argued that the trio engaged in allowable "fair use" because they had legally bought the games and were not profiting from the bypass technology, called BnetD.

Although the trio could have used Blizzard Entertainment Inc.’s Battle.net game service for free, they found it frustrating and preferred the dozens of additional features available through the BnetD technology they had developed, their lawyers said.

Blizzard claimed that BnetD, which the trio also distributed to others over the Internet, disabled controls meant to ensure that players used a non-pirated copy of the game.

Thursday’s ruling by a three-judge panel of the 8th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals here upholds a lower court’s finding that the trio violated the 1998 Digital Millennium Copyright Act as well as software license agreements by helping people bypass Blizzard’s system for playing multiplayer games like Diablo and StarCraft online.

The defendants were barred from further distributing the technology.

Combs and Crittenden are identified in the ruling as computer programmers, and Jung was listed as a systems administrator who also heads Internet Gateway, an Internet service provider based in the suburb of St. Peters.

According to the ruling, the Battle.net service has nearly 12 million active users who spend more than 2.1 million hours online per day.

Blizzard, which did not return messages Friday seeking comment, had lauded the earlier ruling last October by U.S. District Judge Charles Shaw for "sending a clear message that creating unauthorized servers which emulate Blizzard’s Battle.net servers is without question illegal."

"We have worked hard to provide gamers with a free, safe, secure, reliable environment on Battle.net, and this ruling is a strong validation that we are justified in protecting and ensuring the integrity of our game service," said Mike Morhaime, Blizzard’s president and co-founder.

The Electronic Frontier Foundation, a San Francisco-based civil liberties group that helped represent the trio, said the ruling could dampen the market for performance-enhancing innovations called "add-ons" and limit the consumer to whatever the manufacturer of the purchased item decides to provide.

"This ruling threatens competition to offer new services, new features," said Jason Schultz, an attorney for EFF.

Schultz said the foundation would talk to his clients before deciding whether to appeal.

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A-ONE’s Headline News
The Latest in Computer Technology News
Compiled by: Dana P. Jacobson

Don’t Get Ripped Off by Hurricane Cyberscams

Online con artists have launched at least a dozen scams preying on people donating to Hurricane Katrina relief efforts or seeking news, federal authorities and anti-spam experts say.

The FBI is looking into suspicious Web sites and phishing spam messages that attempt to filch personal data such as credit card numbers, spokesman Paul Bresson says.

Some e-mails with fake news alerts include links to sites loaded with computer viruses designed to steal or destroy personal information, says computer-security firm Sophos. It also has spotted e-mails with links to "spoofed" Web sites that look like valid charities.

Separately, individuals are seeking thousands of dollars on eBay for the rights to Internet domain names containing Katrina and hurricane, says Johannes Ullrich, chief research officer at Sans Institute, a computer-security company.

"Any time there's a tragedy, cybercriminals attempt to cash in. It's like clockwork," says Stephen Canale, an independent spam analyst.

The Internet's emergence as a major fundraising tool also has ushered in a wave of online scams designed to fleece consumers, as was the case with the tsunami disaster last year and 9/11.

Hurricane scams are the latest example of Internet fraud by individuals and organized criminals in the USA, Eastern Europe and Africa, says Alfred Huger, senior director of engineering at computer-security giant Symantec.

Bogus charities and scams divert money from legitimate charities that need all the money they can get, watchdog groups say. Many hurricane victims will be homeless for months, putting a strain on social service organizations such as the American Red Cross, says Daniel Borochoff, president of the American Institute of Philanthropy.

After the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks, the American Red Cross came under sharp criticism for diverting money donated for the victims to other programs. Since then, the charity has made changes that will prevent that from happening again, Borochoff says. "They really are making quite an effort to be clear with the public and not continue raising more than they need" for a specific disaster, he says.

Cybersecurity experts have several tips for consumers who want to help hurricane victims without getting ripped off. They urge donors to ignore e-mail asking for money and contribute to organizations they are familiar with.

"Given the nature of what has happened and the urgency with which Americans want to act, I would caution to give with your head as well as your heart," says Bennett Weiner of the Better Business Bureau's Wise Giving Alliance.

AP Offers Satellite Image of New Orleans

The Associated Press is offering Internet access to a satellite image that covers most of New Orleans, detailed enough that viewers can zoom in to check on particular neighborhoods and streets.

The image's resolution is high, at 2.4 meters per pixel. It is posted in a format that allows quick viewing of any area a user zooms in on. Users can quickly see what areas are under water and what structures are still standing.

The initial image was taken Wednesday and supplied by the company DigitalGlobe. AP will offer updated satellite images as as they become available.

The image is available at:

http://hosted.ap.org/specials/neworleanssatellite/index.html

Opera Software Gives Away Browser for 24 Hours

Oslo, Norway-based Opera Software ASA on Tuesday announced that it's giving away complimentary registration codes for its Opera Web browser for 24 hours on Tuesday, August 30, 2005. The giveaway is to celebrate Opera's 10th anniversary.

Opera costs nothing to download and use, but unless a registration code is entered, the software displays advertisements. By filling out your e-mail address on the 10-Year Online Anniversary Web site, you get registration codes for each of the desktop operating systems opera supports, including Mac OS X, Windows, FreeBSD, Solaris, and three flavors of Linux.

Opera features pop-up blocking, tabbed browsing, integrated searching on Google, Amazon and eBay, e-mail, RSS newsfeed support and IRC chat. The browser's interface can be customized with new skins as well.

The current version of Opera works on Mac OS X v10.2 or later.

States Expanding Push for Internet Taxes

Going online to buy the latest bestseller or those photos from summer vacation may be tax free for most people today, but it won't last forever. Come this fall, 13 states will start encouraging - though not demanding - that online businesses collect sales taxes just as Main Street stores are required to do, and more states are considering joining the effort.

Right now, buyers are expected to pay sales taxes on Internet purchases themselves directly to the state when they pay their income taxes. But it's not widely enforced, and states say it costs them upwards of $15 billion a year in lost revenues, collectively.

"Taxes that it was difficult to collect before will now be collected. And consumers will pay that," said David Quam at the National Governors Association, helping lead the five-year effort that brought together state revenue officials, legislators and business leaders.

The question of taxing Internet sales has been in limbo since the dawn of the computer era, when the only issue was catalog sales across state lines.

A 1992 U.S. Supreme Court ruling forbids states from forcing a business to collect their sales taxes unless the company has a physical presence in the affected state. The court noted the dizzying array of tax jurisdictions and widely varying definitions of taxable goods, such as fast food versus groceries.

Organizers of the states' effort, known as the Streamlined Sales Tax Project, sought to unify tax rules and definitions among the states. They hope to persuade federal lawmakers to pass a new law to overcome the

Supreme Court ruling and allow states to take the next step - demanding online companies levy the taxes.

But many businesses are skeptical. Some worry about the complexity of tax rates that vary from city to county to state, others the cost of collecting the taxes. The states' project attempts to answer those worries, but it hasn't eased all doubts.

"Certainly at Amazon, we have no plans to volunteer," said Rich Prem, top tax official at Amazon.com Inc., the online giant with $7 billion in annual sales. The company will work with state and federal leaders, but will only start collecting state taxes "if you make it simple, if you make it fair," he said.

The Direct Marketing Association, a trade group that represents many Internet and catalog sellers, says the effort is far too complex to work.

The project organizers say they have taken significant steps to help businesses get on board.

They created software that will automatically calculate the different taxes for different states and for different items. They promised to pay for special "service providers" that could bill customers, file and pay taxes to the states, and free companies from audit liabilities.

To be accepted as part of the project, a state must change its tax laws to match up with the others. So far, 13 states have come far enough to be part of the project. Five more are approved to join within the next few years, and others have made partial steps.

The process wasn't easy. Among the issues to be answered: If candy is taxed but food isn't, what is candy? And what is food? Is a Twix cookie bar candy or food?

The solution: anything with flour is food, not candy.

"We had to come up with a bright line," said Diane Hardt, Wisconsin's tax administrator and a co-chair of the project. They had originally considered defining all candy as food - but that would have caused a loss of about $20 million a year in Wisconsin sales taxes and closer to $200 million in Texas, she said.

There were a host of other questions affecting state budgets, manufacturers and buyers. Decisions ran across a huge assortment of goods, from fruit juices to tea, to cloth diapers, to mobile classrooms and farm equipment.

The states are offering businesses a promise - and an implicit threat. If businesses register and start collecting taxes this year, they're given a yearlong amnesty from the possibility that states may seek back taxes for online purchases.

"I wouldn't be surprised if the biggest effect comes at the end of the 12 months when businesses say 'I better take this opportunity while I can,'" said Hardt.

The 13 states are Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Michigan, Minnesota, Nebraska, New Jersey, North Carolina, North Dakota, Oklahoma, South Dakota, and West Virginia. Five that will be added in the next few years are Arkansas, Ohio, Tennessee, Utah and Wyoming.

MSN Toolbar Upgraded To Fight Phishing

Microsoft has introduced two additions to the MSN toolbar designed to protect users from phishing attacks and make it easier for them to access the company's online gaming site.

The phishing filter, currently offered as a beta addition to the toolbar, scans Web pages visited by users and prevents customers from entering personal data on known phishing sites. When users access a page that might be a phishing site but is not on the known list, the software issues a warning to users.

Phishing is recognized widely as a growing problem that often results in online identity theft. Phishers typically create bogus Web sites that resemble those of legitimate businesses, financial institutions or government agencies to convince visitors to provide sensitive personal information.

MSN's new toolbar automatically compares addresses of Web sites a consumer attempts to visit with a list of reported legitimate sites. In addition to the toolbar's automatic checks, users can send questionable Web sites to an online service run by Microsoft to check URLs against a frequently updated list of reported phishing sites.

Noting that consumers are increasingly focused on online security and threats of identity theft, Yankee Group analyst Su Li Walker said the phishing filter offers some peace of mind that could draw more people to the MSN portal.

"There is fierce competition among MSN and competitors like Google and Yahoo, and this is one more way that Microsoft can differentiate itself," she said. "Users want a protected experience online, and they may feel more secure surfing the Web with a tool like this."

The new games add-in for the toolbar offers one-click access to the MSN Games portal and provides a pull-down menu of links to that day's most-played games. Players also can see how many other gamers are participating online.

Microsoft claims to have some 30 million registered gamers who use the site and says MSN Games currently is the top channel accessed from the MSN home page.

The gaming site is one place Microsoft can generate revenue through the MSN portal, given the large number of people using that site, said Walker. "The company is doing all it can to draw MSN users to different parts of the portal, including putting an emphasis on games."

Toolbars have become critical offerings for MSN, Google and Yahoo, all of which are trying to be as user-friendly as possible to help people quickly access their search pages and other services on each portal.

Google Branches Out With Print Ads

Google rocked the advertising world Wednesday when it started selling print ads - a sign its impressive lead in online advertising isn't enough for the ambitious, fast-paced search engine company.

Google's foray into offline advertising came in the form of full-page ads in PC Magazine and Maximum PC. Google bought the space for the ads, divided it up, and depending on the page, sold it to four or five companies that wanted to advertise.

In this latest move, Mountain View-based Google is betting it can exploit its relationship with hundreds of thousands of small businesses that already advertise online by its search results. The idea is to help advertisers gain exposure in the offline world at cheaper rates, or with less effort, than they otherwise could have.

Google is "sharing the savings with the smaller guys," says Premsyl Pech, president of a small business, Software602.com, of Jacksonville, Fla., that helps people create Adobe "PDF" files. Pech participated in the PC Mag test.

The terms of Google's future offerings remain unclear, but some believe it might be able to obtain discounted advertising rates by offering publishers a steady volume of advertisers. And some say Google's logo on top of the ads might entice advertisers to pay more than they otherwise would.

Jeff Witkowski, president of AHS Systems, which makes online content management software, was one of five advertisers who split a page in this month's PC Magazine. He paid $2,200 for his fifth - not much compared with PC Magazine's regular charge of $72,497 for a full-page ad, or $14,499 when divided by five.

It's not clear who is paying for the discount. Analysts assumed PC Magazine might have offered lower rates, or that Google agreed to pay full rates in order for the companies to obtain publicity.

Randy Zane, director of public relations for Ziff Davis, owner of PC Magazine, would not say what sort of deal it cut with Google. He said only that the two companies had a "strategic" relationship aimed at building each other's brands.

Google wouldn't comment on the terms of the deal either.

For at least two years, Google has extended its empire by moving beyond simply placing advertisements beside its online search results. It has recently moved to create larger online display ads for companies. And in a dizzying array of other recent deals, Google has invested in a communications infrastructure - for example, Current Communications, a broadband Internet service; and partnered with television network CurrentTV. And there are rumors it is building out a WiFi network in multiple cities.

All of this will help Google act as a conduit for content and advertising delivery and distribution, analysts said. They said the deal reflects Google's strategy to offer a one-stop shop for advertising.

"It's funny, on the one hand this was initially a head-scratcher," said Scott Kessler, an analyst at Standard & Poor's, referring to the widely held assumption that continued online growth offers more immediate opportunity for Google. "But for folks who don't want to advertise separately online and offline, this would give them a unique option."

Depending on how Google plays the game, the move could be seen by publishers as either competitive or complementary. But it also might be a way for Google to pre-empt moves by traditional publishing companies to head in its direction, Kessler said.

Major media companies have been buying up online properties: Dow Jones, owner of the Wall Street Journal, bought MarketWatch; New York Times acquired About.com, E.W. Scripps scooped up Shopzilla, and a trio of companies, including Knight Ridder, owner of the Mercury News, bought a stake in Topix.net.

In any case, there's evidence that Google's popular branding might entice advertisers. Advertiser Witkowski, of AHS, said one of the reasons he participated in the print ad with PC Magazine was to get a boost by being associated with Google.

Text at the top or bottom of the ads said "Ads by Google," but the plain text wasn't as strong as Witkowski would have liked it. "We would have loved to have seen the Google logo," said Witkowski. "We'd hoped to get a bit more of a punch."

As part of the deal, Witkowski has also taken out an ad in next month's edition. He's waiting until October before he decides whether to continue, he said.

Three Indicted For Violating Anti-Spam Law

Three people accused of running a huge computer spam operation have been indicted on charges of violating a law aimed at cracking down on unsolicited e-mails, prosecutors said.

James R. Schaffer, Jeffrey A. Kilbride, and Jennifer R. Clason were each charged on Thursday with two counts of fraud and one count of criminal conspiracy under the U.S. law known as CAN-SPAM, short for Controlling the Assault of Non-Solicited Pornography and Marketing Act.

The law, in effect since January 2004, is meant to diminish unsolicited e-mail messages, commonly known as spam.

Kilbride and Schaffer also were charged with transportation of obscene material using a computer service and one count of money laundering.

Money laundering charges could result with prison sentences of up to 20 years. The obscenity charges carry a maximum sentence of up to 5 years in jail.

Over four months in 2004, more than 600,000 complaints were made to America Online about e-mails sent by the spamming operation, prosecutors said.

Authorities said a fourth person involved in the conspiracy, 31-year-old Andrew Ellifson, had pleaded guilty to a spamming charge and a criminal conspiracy charge. Ellifson's guilty plea, made in February, was unsealed Thursday. Ellifson allegedly assisted in creating and operating the network used to send the spam.

Zotob Arrest Breaks Credit Card Fraud Ring

Turkish officials have identified 16 more suspects this week in a continuing crackdown on illegal online activity that stems from the arrest of two men in connection with the Zotob Internet worm.

The 16 individuals are believed to be connected to a credit card theft and identity theft ring, but not directly involved with the creation or dissemination of Zotob, according to Paul Bresson, an FBI spokesperson.

The action followed the arrest of Atilla Ekici, 21, in Adana, Turkey on Aug. 26 in connection with the recent Zotob Internet worm and with Mytob, another wide-spreading worm that first appeared in February.

Little information was available on the arrests Tuesday, which was a holiday in Turkey. Officials contacted by eWEEK at the U.S. Consulate in Adana and at the U.S. Embassy in Ankara said they had no information on the additional arrests.

However, links between Ekici, who used the online handle "Coder," and co-conspirator Farid Essebar, an 18-year-old resident of Morocco who was known online as "Diabl0," would not be surprising, security experts said.

Both men are believed to have controlled large networks of compromised computers, or "botnets," according to Joe Stewart, a senior security researcher at managed security provider LURHQ Corp.

Bot networks are frequently used to harvest information or intellectual property from compromised machines, as well as for distributing spam, advertising and viruses.

Microsoft Corp. and the FBI were cooperating in an investigation of botnets before Zotob was released, said Tim Cranton, a senior attorney at Microsoft and director of the company’s Internet Safety Enforcement team.

Cranton declined to comment on whether Microsoft’s investigators were on to Diabl0 before Zotob, but said the company had "developed a lot of intelligence" about the botnets Diabl0 operated prior to Essebar’s arrest and that the information "helped inform" the actions of law enforcement.

The 16 new suspects may be operating their own botnets using variants of Zotob or the earlier Mytob worms, which Essebar is believed to have created.

According to Stewart, each member of the group would probably be given a copy of the source code by Essebar and would compile it into a unique Mytob or Zotob variant, with its own IRC (Internet Relay Chat) server and channel details, then release the variant on the Internet and build a botnet out of hosts the worm compromises.

"There would be no reason for them not to have their own botnets," he said. In fact, a sizeable botnet is almost a requirement for those who move in the Internet underground, where the slightest online provocation can invoke a denial-of-service attack from another botnet operator.

While the other suspects in the case may be acquainted with Diabl0 and Coder, Stewart said it’s wrong to think of the botnet operators as a tightly coordinated group.

"It’s really just individuals and small groups of botnet owners who get together," he said.

While Diabl0 and Coder were not the largest botnet operators, they were very successful and their creations generated a lot of "noise" on the Internet, he said. Virus researchers at Sophos PLC’s SophosLabs said that Diabl0 is believed to be behind about 20 other virus variants, including Mydoom-BG and versions of the Mytob worm.

Together, the variants accounted for six of the top 10 viruses and more than 54 percent of all viruses reported to Sophos in August, the company said.

"It will good to see them go," Stewart said.

’Loverspy’ Spyware Creator Indicted, On the Run

The creator of Loverspy, software to surreptitiously observe individuals’ online activities, has been indicted for allegedly violating U.S. federal computer privacy laws.

If convicted, Carlos Enrique Perez-Melara, could face a maximum sentence of 175 years in prison and fines of up to $8.75 million. His current whereabouts are unknown.

Four individuals who purchased Loverspy to illegally spy on others were also indicted.

"This federal indictment - one of the first in the country to target a manufacturer of "spyware" computer software - is particularly important because of the damage done to people’s privacy by these insidious programs," John Richter, acting assistant attorney general of the U.S. Department of Justice’s Criminal Division, said in a statement. "Law enforcement must continue to take action against the manufacturers of these programs to protect unsuspecting victims and seek punishment for those responsible for wreaking havoc online."

Perez-Melara, 25, was indicted last month on 35 counts of manufacturing, sending, and advertising a surreptitious interception device (the Loverspy program), unlawfully intercepting electronic communications, disclosing unlawfully intercepted electronic communications, and obtaining unauthorized access to protected computers for financial gain. Each count carries a maximum penalty of five years in prison and a maximum fine of $250,000.

His indictment was returned on July 21 by a federal grand jury sitting in the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of California in San Diego, but the indictment was unsealed only Friday.

Perez-Melara advertised and sold Loverspy and EmailPI software over the Internet for $89 a copy to people looking to secretly monitor an individual’s e-mail, passwords, chat sessions, and instant messages, as well as the Web sites they visit. Purchasers of the program could log into a Loverspy Members Area on the Loverspy and EmailPI Web sites and choose an e-card and greeting that would be sent to the victim. Loverspy would arrive hidden inside the e-card and would launch when the victim opened

the card. After being installed, Loverspy would send regular reports collating the victim's online activities either directly to the purchaser of the spy software via e-mail or to Perez-Melara, who would then forward the reports to the purchaser. The spyware also enabled the purchaser to remotely control the victim's computer to the extent of altering and deleting files, and surreptitiously turning on any Web camera hooked up to the victim's computer.

From around July 1, 2003, until October 10, 2003, approximately 1000 individuals in the United States and abroad bought Loverspy and sent e-cards containing the application to around 2000 people, according to the authorities. Around half of those 2000 are known to have had their computers compromised and their communications intercepted, the indictment stated. The antivirus software of the day didn't identify Loverspy as dangerous, so it didn't block the program's installation, the indictment noted. Perez-Melara's operations were shut down after the FBI executed a federal search warrant for his San Diego apartment on October 10, 2003.

The victims named in the indictment are located in California, Hawaii, Missouri, New Hampshire, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, and Texas.

The four other individuals indicted with Perez-Melara by the federal grand jury in San Diego are John Gannitto of Laguna Beach, California; Kevin Powell of Long Beach, California; Laura Selway of Irvine, California; and Cheryl Ann Young of Ashland, Pennsylvania. They are each charged with two counts - unauthorized access to protected computers (via Loverspy) in furtherance of other criminal offenses and illegally intercepting the electronic communications of their victims. Each of the two counts carries a maximum penalty of five years in prison and a maximum fine of $250,000.

Other purchasers of Loverspy have been prosecuted by federal authorities in Charlotte, North Carolina, Dallas, and Honolulu. Prosecutions are going ahead in Kansas City, Missouri, and Houston. All known Loverspy victims have been notified by e-mail that they were targeted by the program, according to the authorities.

Man Pleads Guilty to Microsoft Source-Code Theft

A Connecticut man on Monday pleaded guilty in federal court to selling proprietary Microsoft source code in a case that has the potential to take the issue of software piracy to a higher level.

According to the U.S. Attorney's office in Manhattan, William Genovese Jr. entered the plea in a pending indictment that charged him with the unlawful sale and attempted sale of the Microsoft Windows NT 4.0 and Windows 2000 source code, which had previously been stolen by other individuals.

Prosecutors said the code in question, comprising key components of the operating-system software, apparently was stolen in February 2004 and illegally distributed over the Internet. Genovese, who used the Web aliases "illwill" and "xillwillx@yahoo.com," posted a message on his Web site saying that that he had a copy of the stolen source code and was offering it for sale.

A private investigator hired by Microsoft downloaded a copy of the code from Genovese's site, as did an FBI agent, after sending him electronic payments.

Genovese subsequently was charged with unlawfully distributing a trade secret in violation of the Economic Espionage Act. He faces a maximum sentence of 10 years in jail and a $250,000 fine. Sentencing is expected this fall.

The case is noteworthy in that, unlike those who sell bogus copies of Windows OS, Genovese was trying to push source code that could have allowed someone to repurpose the program or detect and exploit vulnerabilities in the software.

Yet it is difficult to imagine how he expected to avoid detection while finding a buyer for the highly sensitive information. "The proliferation of illegal copies of software is hard to control, but in this case the individual was trying to market a very visible thing," said Philip H. Albert, a partner in the law firm Townsend and Townsend and Crew LLP. "It’s like fencing a stereo versus selling a stolen artwork."

While source code potentially is worth considerably more than a copy of Windows, he noted, most people have little use for the code. Albert suggested that most malware practitioners are able to launch their attacks without the code. "There’s a very thin market for it," he said.

Still, the fact that someone with legitimate access to the code could distribute it and offer it for sale represents a problem for Microsoft and other software vendors, said Albert.

Microsoft has stated that it supports the U.S. Justice Department’s efforts to protect software intellectual property rights and will continue to support efforts "to address the protection of intellectual property rights as those efforts are critical to the sustained development of the software industry."

Recording Industry Sues More U.S. File-Swappers

The recording industry on Wednesday filed its latest round of copyright infringement lawsuits, targeting 754 people it claims used online file-sharing networks to illegally trade in songs.

The lawsuits were filed in federal district courts across the country, including California, Colorado, Georgia, Missouri, New York, Pennsylvania, Virginia and Washington, D.C.

The world’s major record labels, represented by the Recording Industry Association of America, have filed more than 14,000 such lawsuits since September 2003.

Yahoo Offers Easier E-Mail Search

Yahoo has developed an improved search technology for users of its Web mail service, including the capability of searching the full text of message attachments, the Sunnyvale, California, company plans to announce Tuesday.

The new search system will enhance the existing capabilities, which are

very basic and only allow users to search for content in a message's subject and sender lines and its body, a Yahoo executive says.

Starting Tuesday, the improved search function will be rolled out in phases over the coming months to users worldwide, says Drew Garcia, a senior product manager on the Yahoo Mail team.

Yahoo Mail's new search function can index the full text of about 20 common types of attachments, including Microsoft Word, Excel, and PowerPoint files, as well as Adobe Systems PDF files, he says.

Another improvement is that, along with each search result, Yahoo Mail also delivers a snippet of the content in which the searched-for term appears. This is intended to give users an idea of the context in which the term is found.

Users don't have to do anything to enable the new search function. Yahoo will index, in the background and automatically, all the existing contents of each Yahoo Mail account, as well as all future messages received, once the search function is enabled for a user, Garcia says.

The new search function applies to Yahoo Mail messages stored on Yahoo's servers, not locally on users' hard drives. However, Garcia says Yahoo is likely to integrate it into other products and services, including possibly Yahoo's desktop search software.

Another new Yahoo Mail search feature is the ability to see thumbnail images of pictures and documents attached to e-mail messages, Garcia says. Users can also open the actual documents from the thumbnail images, he says.

The new search also matches the first letters of search terms, something which comes in handy when the user isn't sure of the correct spelling of a word, he says. For example, a user could search for "rob" and the system will return matches that begin with those letters, such as "robbie" and "robin," he says.

Yahoo Mail's new search function will also let users refine searches and drill down on results to help them find the information they are looking for faster, he says.

Users also will be able to view photos or attached documents in a list of search results by themselves, in thumbnail form, Garcia says. Each thumbnail will be labeled with the subject line of the associated message.

The new search capabilities were developed in-house by Yahoo and prompted by the realization that users are increasingly storing a wide variety of information in their e-mail accounts, making it necessary to provide them with more robust search capabilities, Garcia says. The search system was developed from the ground up to work in an e-mail setting, he says.

The improved search will also be part of a major revamping that Yahoo Mail will undergo as Yahoo incorporates into the Web mail service technology it acquired when it bought Oddpost in July 2004, a Yahoo spokesperson says.

The fruits of that overhaul, such as a significantly redesigned user interface that looks and feels more like a desktop e-mail client than like a Web mail interface, will begin to appear when Yahoo starts an open beta test of the upgraded Yahoo Mail in the coming months, she says.

Facebook Takes Plugged-in Colleges by Storm

When college student Valerie Wang meets a cute guy, she goes right to her dorm and calls up a Web site called Facebook.

She looks at what fraternity he’s part of. She finds out if he plays sports, if he’s in a relationship and, if so, if his girlfriend is pretty.

"It’s an easy way to figure out information about someone without talking to them," said Wang, 18, from Palo Alto, a sophomore at the University of Michigan.

Facebook, based in Palo Alto, is one of a handful of Silicon Valley start-ups that have tried to crack the hyped but elusive world of online "social networking." But while some others are either foundering or still working toward success, Facebook is seeing steady - even surprising - growth.

It has become so addictive that some students find themselves browsing it for hours.

"I wake up and check my e-mail, then I go to Facebook," said Tiffany Chang, 17, from Palo Alto, who goes to the University of California-Davis. "At night, I do the same thing. . . . Facebook is like an ice cream sundae because you can do anything with it, and no matter what, it’s still fun."

It’s still too early to tell whether Facebook, founded in February 2004, is here to stay or is more like the flavor of the year. But for now, it’s on a roll.

Facebook has 3.65 million users. In March, while school was still in session, Facebook had about four times as many visitors as Friendster, another social networking site, according to Comscore.

And these are loyal users: Even during the slow days of summer, more than half signed in every 24 hours. Facebook is now the top-ranking Web site for the hard-to-reach college demographic: The 18- to 24-year-old future - and in some cases current - spenders.

Not surprisingly, advertisers have caught wind of Facebook’s attractive audience. Companies like Victoria’s Secret, Apple Computer and Electronic Arts have formed sponsored groups where students can discuss their products. Between 75,000 and 100,000 users have participated in each of these groups, according to Matt Cohler, the 28-year-old who runs daily operations.

And they’re paying enough money that Facebook became profitable earlier this year, according to Cohler.

That was before the venture capitalists arrived. In May, Palo Alto’s Accel Partners pumped $13 million into Facebook, and encouraged the company to focus on further expansion before stressing too much about profits.

The magic recipe: Facebook has firmly rooted itself in the offline lives of its members. Facebook fans go to the site for daily activities like planning parties, finding the room numbers of classmates and just gawking at the lives of others.

Here’s how. You fill out a profile, listing your favorite music, books and hobbies, for example. You can form or join groups, which may represent real-life clubs or may simply bear cheeky names such as "Ridiculously good-looking people." Each person’s page has a "wall" where friends - and enemies - get to write what they think of you. And Facebook lets students know which of their colleagues is up for "dating," or maybe even "random play."

Facebook has become so pervasive on college campuses that if two students begin dating, their "coupledom" is only considered official once they ’fess up on Facebook.

"One of my friends had been dating someone for awhile, and then one day I went on Facebook, and it said they were together," said Tim Pittman, 21, a senior at Harvard University and one of the site’s first users. "And then I was like, wait a second, this is serious!"

Even the campus police in East Illinois recently used the site to shut down plans for some beer-bout parties.

Facebook works partly because its community is focused, said Dave Edwards, Internet analyst at American Technology Research in San Francisco. It’s also an Internet-savvy community.

"It’s catering to a demographic which is much more used to online interaction," he said.

One limiting factor to Facebook’s growth is the requirement that users have a university (.edu) e-mail address. That helps provide some shelter from the outside world, and it’s part of why people open up, said Chief Executive Mark Zuckerberg, 21.

"More information is available to less people," he said.

When 21-year-old Sushu Xia from Palo Alto, a senior at the University of Chicago, desperately needed a book, she asked the university’s librarian who had borrowed it, then looked his room number up on Facebook. Minutes later, she was knocking on his dorm room door.

But she is also aware that this information could be used in the wrong way.

"Facebook is helpful for stalking," Xia said. "You think that only friends care enough to look you up, but sometimes creepy people do."

Some say Facebook can offer valuable clues about a person.

’Better for red flags’

"The Facebook is better for red flags than for reasons to be somebody’s friend," said 18 year-old Becca Tisdale, a freshman at Stanford University, adding that she is wary of people who have lewd Facebook photos.

Of course, not everybody sees the point of Facebook. Tali Manber, a 21-year-old senior at Stanford University, said she rarely logs in.

"If I was spending that much time online, I’d rather use that time to actually see people in person," she said.

The company’s visionary is its founder, Harvard student Zuckerberg. He

launched the site last February with two of his roommates, Dustin Moskovitz and Chris Hughes. It now employs 40 people, though that includes some outside contractors.

It wasn't Zuckerberg's first foray into the online world. In late 2003, as a prank, he created facemash.com, a site that popped up two student photos and asked people to choose who was more attractive. For that, Harvard's administration put him on probation.

And it hasn't all been smooth sailing. A competitor, ConnectU, sued Zuckerberg for allegedly stealing code. Zuckerberg denies the accusation. He has counterclaimed.

The management structure is "still relatively fast and loose," admitted Cohler, who at 28 was until recently the company's oldest employee.

Napster co-founder and former Plaxo Chief Executive Sean Parker, 25, is heading the business side. Parker introduced Zuckerberg to Peter Thiel, the founder of PayPal, who invested seed money into Facebook.

Meanwhile, the company continues to expand. It hopes to reach 6 million college students by the end of the year, and make Facebook available at every four-year college in the United States by fall.

Robot Dog - Man's Best Friend or a No-fat Nag?

It could be a dream or a nightmare - scientists have created a robotic dog that tells you when it's time for your daily walk.

Researchers at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in the United States plan to recruit Sony's "canine entertainment robot" Aibo into the obesity police.

The dog would be connected by radio to the bathroom scales, a pedometer and a personal organizer in which the owner would note his daily food intake, New Scientist magazine reported on Wednesday.

Asked "How am I?" the robot would either jump excitedly, play funky music and flash colored lights, or flop down and play a dirge, according to whether its owner has followed his or her diet.

"It is promising to look at mobile robots for defining behavioral change," computer scientist Tim Bickmore at Boston University's School of Medicine was quoted as saying.

The plans for the robotic dog - which need never be let out or fed - are due to be presented to a conference in Tokyo on September 11, the magazine said.

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